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SUBJECT: GADDAFI CANCELS VISIT TO GHANA

¶1. SUMMARY: (U) An international conference of West African traditional rulers scheduled to be held in Ghana was abruptly canceled three days before Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi was scheduled to be crowned "king of kings" at the event. Reasons for the cancellation are not clear, but press speculation centers on a misunderstanding between the GOG and the National House of Chiefs that was to host the event about the purpose of the meeting. Gaddafi, who had planned to pay for the conference, is thought to have wanted to use the traditional leaders to push for a single African government with him as president, a move opposed by elected officials.
END SUMMARY

¶2. (U) The first West Africa Traditional Rulers conference was scheduled to bring together more than 600 chiefs, kings, sultans, and mayors of cities in West Africa. Ghana was selected to host the conference entitled "The role of traditional rulers in the integration of African states" in honor of the centenary of the birth of Ghana's first president and pan-Africanist Kwame Nkrumah.

¶3. (U) The conference was to have been paid for then opened by Gaddafi, who one newspaper called "the main character of the event". Delegates to the conference were expected to proclaim Gaddafi "king of kings" despite the fact that the same title was bestowed on him last year by 200 traditional rulers and African kings at a conference in Libya.

¶4. (U) Staff at the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Culture confirmed reports printed in a state-owned newspaper that Gaddafi wanted to use the traditional leaders to push for a single African government in which the traditional rulers hold a formal place and Gaddafi is president, a move to which Africa's elected political leaders object. In what appears to be a face-saving measure, the same newspaper reported Libyan government sources as saying Gaddafi could not make the trip because he was attending to some exigencies and that his visit has been rescheduled for September. The president of the National House of Chiefs said the conference had been called off because of a "technical hitch" and was in no way related to Gaddafi's inability to make the trip.

¶5. (U) The timing of the traditional rulers' event also raised questions in the media. The African Union (AU) Summit in Libya ended July 3, seven days before President Obama arrived in Ghana and gave a forceful speech in support of Ghana's democratic principles. One commentator noted that Gaddafi's visit to Ghana less than two weeks after the President's visit would have been an apparent challenge to the USG efforts to shore up Ghana's and Africa's progress in developing home-grown democracy, freedoms, and the rule of law.
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